

CPAC MEETING  
April 9, 2003

**Those in attendance:** Jennifer Barber, CPAC Chair; Roberta Ray for Susan Cycyk/CMH; Jane Brady/Attorney General; Mary Lou Edgar/ICOA; Pete Feliceangeli/Department of Justice; Carlyse Giddins/DFS; John Humphrey/CAC; Janice Mink/Grassroots Citizens for Children; Julia Pearce/CPRB; Commissioner Patricia Stewart/Family Court; Roger Blevins/CPRB; Mary Ball Morton/DSCYF; Tania Culley/OCA; Joseph Smack/DFS; Candace Charkow/DFS; Laura Miles; DFS; Karen DeRasmo/Prevent Child Abuse Delaware; Anne Pedrick/OCA; Lynn Shreve/CASA; Jessica Schacter/OCA; Betsy Ferry/OCA.

I.      **Introduction of new CPAC chair** -- Jennifer Barber, Esquire.

II.     **Division of Family Services**

Packages of information passed out w/3 attachments. Statistical update, highlights from accounting summary, & caseload report as of March 31. Federal General Accounting Office's report on caseworker turnover can be found on website. [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov) DE was cited favorably in report regarding maintaining new hire pools and maintaining a pool of competent and well-trained staff.

DE Caseworker Turnover -- FY00 was 23%, FY01 was 21% and FY02 was 15%. So far 8.1% in FY03. DFS is working with the union on a mid-shift work proposal, to help with late day urgent investigations.

Hotline Reports -- In FY02, 7629 reports through first quarter. Showing about 13% decrease in reports for FY03. This may be occurring due to community work to prevent child abuse.

Senate Bill 142 Averages -- Numbers show caseworkers carrying higher than average numbers at several DFS locations. Another request to fill overhire positions has been made. Worker retention and experience is remaining constant. In retaining workers, the first two years are the most challenging. Once workers pass that milestone, DFS is better able to maintain staff long-term.

Additional stressors on caseworkers are increased paperwork and obligations under federal and state law. In recent years, several federal and states laws have passed. Legal process is more involved. Caseworkers have increased administrative workload and paperwork as a result.

DFS Employee of the Year is Laura Pepper. She was the employee of the year last year for the Department and State Recipient of 2003 Commissioner's Award for Delaware. She traveled to St. Louis, Missouri, for the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.

### **III. Office of the Child Advocate**

Ann Marie Johnson worked as a Deputy Child Advocate during Tania's maternity leave. All referrals are now in the database, but fields still need to be filled in for sorts, etc. Since OCA has opened, it has received referrals on approximately 1,300 children. Approximately 611 children have been appointed attorneys through OCA. New Castle County still carries highest number of cases. OCA continues to work on strategies to increase the appointments in Kent and Sussex Counties.

OCA has provided in-house training to larger firms in an effort to recruit more *pro bono* attorneys. Between CASA and OCA, it is estimated that most of the new foster care cases are being represented by a guardian ad litem.

### **IV. Children's Advocacy Center**

CAC opened its third center in Dover at the St. Jones Behavioral Health Center. Expect by April 21 to have staff on site and phones working and start taking some business. New forensic interviewer is Kendra Maloy, former DFS employee. CAC will next attempt to locate space in Georgetown. Once centers are located appropriately will look at extended hours and evenings.

Mental Health Assessments moving slowly. The Attorney General was successful in assisting with issues surrounding reimbursement. Meeting with A.I. Dupont Hospital finds that kids being taken for assessment by DFS and law enforcement are not getting mental health services they need.

### **V. Child Death Review Commission**

The Child Death Review Panel has had one new expedited child death review and criminal charges are still pending in that case. In this case, recommendations were made from the panel but there was no quorum due to potential witnesses not being in the room. CDRC is working to address the issue.

Dr. Garrett Colmorgen is the new Chair of the Child Death Review Commission. There is a subcommittee that meets every other Thursday to discuss panel revisions and improved processes.

### **VI. Family Court**

Chief Judge Poppiti resigned as of March 31, 2003. The Court is waiting for a new Chief Judge and a new Commissioner. Commissioner position is result of changes to the Child Protection Registry. New registry process has begun. For now, Kent and Sussex Counties are dividing the cases.

## **VII. Department of Justice**

Civil Division has had some interesting decisions from Supreme Court affecting how child welfare cases are handled. The Supreme Court denied an appeal from a permanency hearing as interlocutory. In another case, the Supreme Court affirmed a Family Court decision finding a child neglected due to the history of the parents with the child's siblings. Mike Ripple, DFS DAG will be leaving. This is the third DFS deputy in a year and a half. DOJ is currently short six people in civil division.

## **VIII. Subcommittee Reports**

Foster Care: Discussions have begun for training of foster families by CMH. Book on children entering foster care and their emotional needs will be distributed to all foster families.

Training: Children's Justice Act money supported the Training Consortium. Conference scheduled for April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> at the Dover Downs Conference Center.

Community Notification: Sex offender website available and continuing to be updated by DELJIS grant. More public awareness needed on prevention issues surrounding sexual abuse. The Committee will continue to work in partnership with Children's Trust Fund.

Best Interests: Initial meetings about to occur. Also excited about CMH training.

## **VIII. Legislation**

HB 23 -- SUPPORT

HB 33 – RESERVE DECISION.

HB 41 – OPPOSE

HB 66 – OPPOSE BUT SUPPORT SB14 AND INCORPORATE HB66 THEREIN

HB 71 – NO POSITION

HB 77 – SUPPORT

HB 78 – SUPPORT

HB 80 – SUPPORT CONCEPT BUT FISCAL NOTE NEEDED

HB 84 – RESERVE DECISION

SB 15 – ON GOVERNOR'S DESK. SUPPORTED LAST YEAR

## TPR – 6 MONTH CURE OF DEFECTS – SUPPORT

### IX. Other Business

Youth Summit – May 8<sup>th</sup>. Del Tech – Dover. Sponsored by Independent Living Advisory Board, DSCYF and Benchmark Builders.

Holistic Services Team - Children's Department looking at a new individualized, independent treatment for certain children. Contractors working on recruitment and treatment. Costs are half to two-thirds of the cost of residential treatment or out of state institutional treatment. Anticipate to 15 to 25 children might move into this arrangement in New Castle County over the course of the next year.

**Next CPAC meeting is the Legislative Meeting on May 21, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. in the Governor's Conference Room.**

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Wendy Gerlach